



Napier University's Investigation Pays Off with the M86 Web Filter and Reporter

Client:

Napier University

Web Site:

www.napier.ac.uk

Number of Users:

17,000

Requirements:

Web Filtering and Reporting

Solutions:

M86 Web Filter and Reporter

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Robin Ferris
Networked Systems Analyst

Profile

Located in Edinburgh, Scotland, Napier University is a dynamic, innovative and forward-looking institution committed to high education standards. These high standards not only apply to students and staff, but to educational resources as well. With ambitions to become Scotland's best modern University, Napier employs leading-edge technology in order to support both students and staff in their studies.

The Challenge

The University cannot afford to overlook its high technological standards, which are vital to educational development. With over 17,000 users utilising 3,000 University Computers across 10 geographically dispersed Campuses, a simple case of malware could seriously impact the University's network and thus impede upon crucial research. Robin Ferris, Networked Systems Analyst, says, “The University gives students and staff almost free reign to retrieve whatever information they deem necessary to advance their studies. However, there are various sites that must be blocked from minors for safety reasons. In addition, freedom to access most sites can be a double-edged sword—while students and staff may visit mostly anywhere on the Internet, malware and spyware invariably visit University computers.” Although Napier does have an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) in place, IT administrators found they needed a better way of ensuring the safety of its network and of its users.

Apropos to their reputation of staying ahead of the technological curve, Mr. Ferris and his team of IT administrators conducted research of their own in terms of finding the best Internet filtering and reporting solution. “We set out to evaluate all the top Web filtering appliances. Our primary reason for doing so was to protect our students from harmful Web content and to enforce our and the Joint Academic Network's AUP (JANET <http://www.webarchive.ja.net>). It would also allow us to keep up with and exceed current UK/EU legislation and best practices as regards Internet usage at the University. A key point was that our selected solution did not introduce any surfing delay and change the online experience that students and staff have become used to. We knew the only way to protect our network and our community's valuable research was to find a Web filter that works just as hard as we do,” Mr. Ferris says.

Mr. Ferris and his team compared six of the leading Internet filtering and reporting providers, including M86's solution. The main components they were looking for in a filter included:

1. Network Performance
2. Scalability
3. Cost (TCO)
4. Feature set
5. Technical Support

“All of the solutions — except for M86’s — failed due to performance,” he says. “M86 came out ahead of the game on performance and also in our confidence that it would be up to the task of managing our network load where other appliances had failed. It was also the only solution that held all five of our major requirements.”

Solution

Mr. Ferris and his team first heard about the M86 solution when it was rated a “5 Star Best Buy” by SC Magazine. “We were very impressed with the superb rating SC Magazine gave the solution, and we knew we had to evaluate it along with other leading solutions. We contacted Business Concepts, a M86 UK reseller, and they were extremely helpful in installing the solution and maintaining support. Their support went above and beyond support from vendors for the other solutions.”

After reviewing the solutions, Napier University’s IT staff found that the M86 Web Filter and Reporter (M86 WFR) provided the best solution for its specific Education needs. It provides a scalable, high-speed filtering solution that integrates easily into any existing network infrastructure. Organised as a stand-alone appliance, the M86 WFR does not require installation on an existing proxy server, which means it will never slow down or interfere with the flow of network traffic. Without the constant requirement to manage filtering, IT staff can focus on mission critical projects, making their time more productive and cost effective. “The other solutions we evaluated all relied on proxying Web connections, which failed miserably. Marshal8e6’s approach was novel in the fact that it does not proxy connections and allows our network to continue functioning brilliantly,” says Mr. Ferris.

He continues: “We also love the fact that M86 is a ‘client-less’ solution—that is, we didn’t have to install a client on each PC to get filtered. One box covers our entire network. This has saved our IT administrators much time and effort and has also enabled the University to cut down on costs.”

The only stand-alone appliance that reports on users’ Web activities, the M86 WFR is optimised to generate fast, detailed, and customisable reports. Mr. Ferris says, “It will give us a very valuable tool to aid in our diagnosis of network issues caused by inappropriate use of the University’s computers. It has made our lives much less stressful when it comes to creating reports for University Management.”

Finally, compared to other products, Napier’s IT staff found the Graphical User Interface (GUI) for the Filter and the Reporter to be easier to use. “The GUI is extremely flexible in allowing us to view different categories. We are really pleased with how easy it is to use.”

Result

“We are completely satisfied with the product and level of support from both M86 and their partner Business Concepts. After having reviewed many other appliance vendors, it was very easy and pleasant to deal with them. Some vendors had up to five different outside agencies involved in their solutions, which became almost totally unworkable,” says Mr. Ferris.

“The ultimate decision came down to the fact that M86 is an all-inclusive solution where we do not have to purchase additional hardware. We were very impressed with how easy it was to contact either them or Business Concepts for any issue, rather than going to another vendor. M86 and Business Concepts were brilliant every step of the way and made the entire process very simple.”

ABOUT M86 SECURITY

M86 Security is the global expert in real-time threat protection and the industry’s leading Secure Web Gateway provider. The company’s appliance, software, and Software as a Service (SaaS) solutions for Web and email security protect more than 24,000 customers and over 17 million users worldwide. M86 products use patented real-time code analysis and behavior-based malware detection technologies as well as threat intelligence from M86 Security Labs to protect networks against new and advance threats, secure confidential information, and ensure regulatory compliance. The company is based in Orange, California with international headquarters in London and development centers in California, Israel, and New Zealand.

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